



YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

By Steve LaCheen

He had read and never forgotten Lord Dunsany's famous short story, "Two Bottles of Relish," and so, he knew just how to do it. He had despised the old witch since the day after he married her for her money, when he found out that she wasn't nearly as sick as she pretended. He hated her, every bone, every sinew, and every ounce of flesh on her body, from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet, from her wasted haunches to the wart on the end of her nose.

Although crippled and unable to walk, she was well enough to keep him hopping 15 hours a day, carrying her up and down the steps, fixing her meals, adjusting the television, and running her errands. Her illness, far from being fatal as she had pretended, was simply chronic, and she intended to see to it that he took care of her as long as she lived, after which she would take care of him, or so she promised. In the meantime, she kept him "waiting."

He was well aware of the adage that said they also serve who only wait, but he soon tired of waiting and even more tired of serving; so he began to chop wood to keep a perpetual fire blazing in the hearth, and he purchased as much relish as he would need for condiment purposes.

The details of the murder are not relevant to this history, and the reader may be spared their recounting. Suffice it to say that the murder was accomplished quickly. The body was drained, dismembered, and frozen, and then, with the help of the proverbial relish, devoured over a period of months. They had had no friends; the deceased had been an orphan and was a widow when they met; so no one came to call. When she was finally gone for good, he reported her disappearance to the

authorities.

The administrative details seemed to take forever, but his wife was eventually declared dead, and in due course the estate was scheduled for distribution. At the solicitor's office, prior to court proceedings, he learned for the first time the full extent of her holdings, which were

roughly twice what he had expected. He felt a strange, tingling sensation in his limbs as he contemplated what the future held in store. It was all his now. No more waiting.

The solicitor looked up from the papers spread out before him and attempted to engage the now somewhat-less-than bereaved widower in amiable conversation.

"I say, Old Chap, I dare say you're heard the old adage about people living together starting to look alike. Well, I've not seen your late missus in quite some time, but you are starting to favor her quite a bit, even down to that little wart on the end of your nose."

He started to protest, but thought better of it and just smiled, anxious to have the matter finalized.

"Let's get on to Court, then, shall we?" he said, as he started to rise, only to find that his legs had lost the power to stand. ■

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PENNSYLVANIA DOG LAW NEUTERS POLICE AND ANIMAL CONTROL



By Matt Packard

Three dog attacks occurred in a Riverwards neighborhood between January 1 and May 1, 2020, all by the same animal. Each attack resulted in serious injuries, E.R. visits, and costly medical bills.

You'd be forgiven if you thought that Pennsylvania law would permit the police and animal control to confiscate and euthanize that dog after three attacks, but you'd be wrong. After the dog attacked my wife on the sidewalk while she was out for a run, it took 60 days for a summary hearing to occur. During that time, a second victim was attacked, badly, again walking on a public sidewalk. That second victim attended the first summary trial but was not permitted to testify because the law considered that attack a separate summary offense. Then, on May 1, four months after the first incident, and before a second summary trial could even occur, a child was attacked—again, badly. The police and animal control finally convinced the owner to give up the dog, but the harsh and incomprehensible reality is despite three unprovoked attacks on public property, two of which were captured on video, the police had no legal power to enter the home and remove the animal. This law must be reformed.

In Pennsylvania, the Department of Agriculture regulates dangerous dogs. This structure, in and of itself, is anachronistic, as dogs in our commonwealth have not been primarily agricultural for, let's just say, about a century. The relevant statute known as the Dog Law ("the Act") is 3 Pa. Stat. §§ 459-100 et seq. A citation for harboring dangerous dogs in Pennsylvania is a summary offense. *Id.* at 459-502A. And the crux of the matter is this Act explicitly abrogates all local ordinances related to dangerous dogs. *Id.* at 459-507.

First, keeping a dangerous dog should not be a summary offense. Here's a list of other summary offenses for comparison:

- Underage drinking
- Disorderly conduct
- Public urination
- Public drunkenness / intoxication
- Traffic offenses
- Service theft (less than \$50)
- Retail theft (first offense, less than \$150 value)
- Illegal use of shopping carts
- Ticket scalping
- Harassment
- Opening fire hydrants
- Criminal mischief
- Obstructing a highway
- Defiant trespassing
- Retention of library property after notice to return

The Commonwealth considers the above offenses on the same level of risk as harboring, for example, a 100-pound pit bull that attacks unprovoked (this is no breed hit piece, but pit bulls with bad owners are far more dangerous than, say, shitzus). Ticket scalpers aren't actually running around with knives scalping people. Public urination and retained library books cannot and do not send children to the hospital with lacerated muscles and snapped tendons. The drafting of this law would be comical if it were not so serious.

Second, even if harboring a vicious dog remains a summary offense, the law should permit localities to expedite the adjudication process. In a city as large as Philadelphia, summary



No other summary offense carries a risk of a piece of “personal property” escaping into the public and mauling a child while the city trundles its way through the summary offense process with the other urinators, book thieves, and shopping cart vandals.

offenses move too slow. In the hands of irresponsible owners (of which there are many), dangerous dogs are perpetually mobile until they are quarantined or confiscated by the state or city. No other summary offense carries a risk of a piece of “personal property” escaping into the public and mauling a child while the city trundles its way through the summary offense process with the other urinators, book thieves, and shopping cart vandals. Currently, a second attack in the interim does not change the function of the law at all; the summary offense process just goes on repeat. Sixty days per citation for a summary trial. One hundred and twenty days for that dog to get loose for the third time and maul a child. Harrisburg has neutered local law enforcement’s ability to protect its populace.

Finally, the greatest tragedy in this particular case is the owner of the dog is almost certainly judgment proof. None of these three victims is likely to receive restitution for their medical expenses or compensation for their pain

and suffering. Just imagine the physical and emotional damage done to the child by this large, aggressive dog—one that the city knew was dangerous, wanted to remove, but could do nothing about.

Triple dog attacks should be a never-occurrence. Common sense, simple amendments that keep the spirit and foundation of the law in place would prevent this scenario from ever happening again. Harrisburg should amend the Act with bipartisan support through at least one of the following ways: (1) draft an exception to the local ordinance abrogation provision to allow for any local ordinance solely to address the speed of summary offense adjudication of dog bite complaints; (2) permit class 1 and class 2 cities (those with large population densities more at risk of loose dangerous dogs) to draft their own local ordinances that do not conflict with state law; (3) empower local police to confiscate a dog until final adjudication if a second attack occurs while a first summary offense citation is

still in process; or (4) create a taxpayer-funded relief program for victims of attacks by dogs whose owners are uninsured and otherwise judgment proof.

Philadelphia police, City Council, and animal control supported these victims and did everything they could to intervene, but they were powerless without the owner’s cooperation. Travesty is an apt word. The law is not supposed to create an absurd result, but here it has. Harrisburg is duty-bound to give the power back to police across the Commonwealth to protect the public from vicious dogs. The Secretary of Agriculture sure isn’t going to do it. ■

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